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INFO RUCNCOM/EC CARICOM COLLECTIVE

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 03 KINGSTON 000760

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR WHA/CAR (ACADIEUX) (VDEPIRRO)
WHA/EPSC (MROONEY)
S/ES - O
DSCC
DS/IP/WHA
SANTO DOMINGO FOR FCS AND FAS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: AEMR ASEC FAIR ECON CASC PINR XL JM
SUBJECT: JAMAICA: CAT 1 STORM GUSTAV SITUATION REPORT 1

SUMMARY

¶1. The predicted track and intensity of Category 1 Storm Gustav shifted significantly overnight, and was now predicted to pass just south of Jamaica during the day at winds approaching hurricane force. DCM invoked emergency telephone tree at 0645 local time. Normal embassy and consular operations to be suspended for the day, and only personnel essential to dealing with the situation are to report. Ambassador and Peace Corps Director decided to proceed with swearing in ceremony for 10 AM. DCM notified Operations center of revised Mission posture.

News Reports

¶2. CNN news is reporting that Tropical Storm Gustav is picking up steam and advancing toward Jamaica. According to weather reports Gustav is expected to keep strengthening over the next 48 hours saying "Gustav could regain hurricane strength by Friday," the advisory said. CNN is also reporting that the storm is reforming to the south and its center may pass close to Jamaica later Thursday. The Government of Jamaica has issued a hurricane warning and has suspended normal business operations.

Airports Open, Flights Cancelled

¶3. The operations centers as Norman Manley Airport, Kingston and Sangster Airport, Montego Bay claim they are open for normal business operations. However, a representative from Air Jamaica said all Air Jamaica flights are cancelled in and out of Jamaica. An American Airline representative said a 10 AM flight out of Jamaica is still scheduled to depart and a 1 PM flight from the U.S. is still scheduled to arrive. NOTE: Given the way the storm is moving it is likely any flights in to Jamaica will soon be diverted away in preparation for the storm. END NOTE.

Embassy Updates by Section

¶4. CONSULAR SECTION:

- The Consular Section is closed for all normal services, including American Citizen Services and visa services, on Thursday August 28.

- The section will send out a Warden Announcement ASAP notifying American citizens of the Consular Section's closing on August 28 and advising everyone to take appropriate action to protect themselves as Gustav's effects are felt in Jamaica.

- The section is staying in close contact with the two consular

officers that were pre-deployed to the Cayman Islands and Montego Bay on August 26 and 27, respectively.

- The Consul General, ACS Unit Chief, and ACS Vice Consul are in the office this morning to ensure that American citizens are well-served.

15. MANAGEMENT SECTION:

- All residential generators being topped off with fuel this morning.

- Maintenance staff taking measures at Powell Plaza and other government-owned housing to protect facilities.

- All loose items being put inside at NEC. Sandbags are being installed to prevent drain blockage and flooding of lower end of site.

- Vehicles being moved to avoid damage from falling tree limbs

- All non-emergency staff sent home

16. COMMUNITY LIAISON OFFICE

- At 7 AM - American International School contacted the CLO to inform us that school had decided to close today due to a hurricane watch that has been issued for 12 noon today.

- Bus drivers and parents were notified and children picked up were returned home and also calls and emails were sent out to parents to inform them of the closure.

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17. USAID:

- USAID has closed its office today with the exception of several staff that will be on stand-by to monitor any potential request for disaster assistance.

- USAID staff are in contact with the USAID/OFDA Disaster Risk Management Specialist and is being updated on ODPEM actions on an hourly basis.

- USAID has pre-positioned supplies located in its Miami warehouse and is ready to provide assistance if a request is made by the GOJ.

- Mission Disaster Relief Officer (MDRO) has received a list of needs from Office of Disaster Preparedness and Emergency Management (ODPEM) within the GOJ should a disaster be declared.

18. PUBLIC AFFAIRS OFFICE

- Public Affairs has sent out a press release informing the public that the U.S. Embassy is Closed on August 28 and to remind people that it will also be closed for the holiday on September 1.

19. REGIONAL SECURITY OFFICE

- RSO Kingston office is fully staffed with RSO, ARSO, ARSO/I, and RSO OMS.

- MSG Detachment at full strength minus 1 Marine (4/1).

- Local Guard Force is in place at all locations, and at Full Strength. Statis, outdoor local guard positions may be moved during the storm, for the safety of the guards. In this case, roving patrols will be utilized until the storm diminishes.

- RSO Surveillance Detection (SD) team has been sent home from their outside positions.

- 7-man DS/ATA team coordinated by former DSS SA Dave Haag has cancelled today's training classes, and is returning to the Hilton

hotel to ride out the storm. Sufficient food and water is with trainers for 1-2 days. This TDY staff is prepared to move to the NEC if the storm rises to a Category 3 or higher, or if the decision is made to move personnel to the NEC.

- Coordinating with MGT, IPC and CONS for the conduct of Embassy operations.

BACKGROUND: CORE EAC MEETINGS AUG 26-27

- Embassy Kingston Core EAC (DCM, CG, ACS, MGT, MDRO, RSO) met variously beginning August 26 to assess evolving situation with respect to Tropical Storm/Hurricane Gustav and to make decisions concerning our Mission's posture.

- We held the first meeting at 0800 Kingston time 8/26 following morning forecast from National Hurricane Center (NHC) that put Jamaica within the cone of Gustav. Storm was forecast to pass north of Jamaica south of Cuba, and to reach vicinity of Caymans. We decided to cancel previously a scheduled trip to Caymans by CONS and RSO to examine new site for consular agency. MDRO reported OFDA had people on standby in Florida ready to deploy. We determined to prepare for possible decision to pre-deploy consular personnel to Jamaican north coast and Caymans. Consular undertook to alert consular agents and to prepare and clear a warden message. WHA/CAR notified of our revised posture.

- Kingston core EAC met again at 1530 local time 8/26, at which time it was determined to deploy consular officer Meagan Call to the Caymans, departing on 8 AM flight 8/27. Predicted storm track remained as before. This flight was only available opportunity to deploy to Caymans before predicted storm arrival. Warden message had been cleared by Washington and sent out. Report from Caymans consular agent discussed. Decision to deploy consular officer to Montego Bay deferred until morning of 8/27.

- Kingston core EAC reconvened at 0800 local time 8/27. Predicted storm track remained as before. Decision deferred to deploy consular officer to Montego Bay. MDRO reported attending meeting hosted by UN on disaster preparedness. Jamaican agency ODPEM reported 140 priority shelters on island, 8000 beds/blankets available. Relief supplies depleted since Dean in 2007 and in need

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of replenishment. Early warning issued re possible flooding in eastern parishes.

- Core EAC met 1130 8/27 and decided to deploy consular officer Beth Howard and Embassy car/driver to Montego Bay. Forecast Gustav track essentially unchanged, but storm progress slowed and storm weakened over Haiti. Reports from consular agents in Caymans and Montego Bay discussed.

- Core EAC met 1530 local time 8/27. RSO reported circulation of updates to Cascade phone list and cell phone lists. No change to predicted Gustav track or Mission posture.

JOHNSON